

# Perception of Undergraduate Students on Peer Pressure, Environment, Gender and Self-esteem towards Virginity

Omonike Omowaye<sup>1</sup> Helen Olagundoye<sup>2</sup> Morakinyo Balogun<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Omolayo<sup>2</sup>

1. Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

2. Department of Psychology, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

3. Department of Psychology & Counselling Services, Federal University, Otuoke, Nigeria

## Abstract

The study examined the perception of undergraduate students on peer pressure, environment, gender and self-esteem towards virginity. 200 students drawn from Psychology department of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria were used as participants, and their age ranges between 16 years and 28 years. They were selected through randomization and purposive sampling method. A questionnaire that consists of four sections was used to generate response from the participants. Data collected were analyzed using 2x2 Analysis of Variance. Two hypotheses were tested and results shows that peer pressure and self-esteem has influence on virginity but environment and gender has no influence on virginity. Also, no interaction influence of peer pressure and environment was found on virginity, while gender and self-esteem has no interaction influence on virginity.

**Keywords:** undergraduate, peer pressure, environment, gender, self-esteem, virginity.

## 1. Introduction

Virginity is refraining from sexual activity in order to avoid and prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Virginity is a state of being a virgin but it can never be regained when lost. Virginity of a female is known during her first intercourse, but that of a male cannot be known. The hymen itself does not hurt, the pain or hurt is from ripping off the hymen or vaginal muscles being stretched that have not been stretched before, or farther than before, causing the rips or tears inside the vagina, resulting in bleeding. George (2005) viewed virginity as a symbol of purity, self control, and decency. In the finding of Carpenter (2001), a person could lose his/her virginity the first time he/she engaged in vaginal sex, but other kinds of genital sex could, under some circumstances, result in virginity loss. In the Yoruba culture of Nigeria, virginity was classified as a gift only to be released to a husband. It is expected of a woman to remain chaste until marriage, but a woman breaks her family's honour if she is not chaste. In Yoruba society, men feel more secure to have a virgin bride, and they see it as a source of pride and satisfaction. This feeling has driven many societies' ideology about the importance of virginity among young girls. The culture of the Yorubas on virginity correlates with the view of Gonzalez-Lopez (2003) that virginity was kept out of fear for some women, a larger part of keeping virginity was a man's view of clean and unclean women. A virgin in a society is able to progress farther, as marriage is her only chance at mobility. Non-virgins were seen as used, unclean, and they were considered undesirable partners as men did not want a piece of bread that has been touched by others. The term, virgin, has become confusing as we try to label persons of both genders, as well as transgendered persons, and all persons of sexual orientations (straight, gay and bisexual), but it is assumed that, virgin means not having had been penetrated sexually.

Developing a sexual self-concept is an important developmental stage at adolescence because it is a stage where adolescents organize their sexual experiences in order to understand the structures and underlying motivations for their sexual behaviour. Sexual self-concept affects sexual behaviour for both men and women. Butler, Miller, Holtgrave, Forehand, & Long (2006) opined that development of sexual self-concept can occur even before sexual experiences begin, but important aspects of sexual self-concept are sexual esteem and sexual anxiety. Hensel, Fortenberry, O'Sullivan, & Orr (2011) asserts that sexual self-concept is not only developed from sexual experiences, but can also be learnt from social interactions such as the family, sexual education programs, depictions in the media and from friends and peers.

Peer pressure is influence that a peer group exerts on individuals which bring about attitudinal or behavioural change in ensuring group conformity. Peer pressure can be a powerful force as every individual want sense of belonging to a group. It has negative consequences such as alcohol and drug use, sexual risk taking, and also has positive consequences such as knowledge exchange. However, peer groups vary in their norms and values, and some young people find themselves under peer pressure to behave in socially desirable ways such as pressure for academic excellence, avoid drugs, and to remain virgins. Brown (2004) found that peers are the most influential factor in adolescent's decisions about sex. Berndt (2004) described four types of support that friends provide for each other: informational support, instrumental support, companionship support, and esteem support. Informational support refers to guidance and advice in personal problems with parents, romantic relationships, teachers or other friends. Instrumental support refers to help on any type of task, such as homework or chores. Companionship support refers to reliance on friends to do things with, such as someone to

eat lunch with or go to a dance or sporting event. Esteem support refers to the encouragement friends provide both when life is going well (e.g., congratulating each other) and when life does not go as one hoped (e.g., consoling in the face of failure). In addition, individuals' conceptions of friendships change as they progress through childhood and adolescence. During childhood and into adolescence, friendships become more stable and intimate. According to Berndt (2004), support provided by friends are very good but more often have its negative effect because peers giving all these supports can also provide bad advice especially on sex. Bad advice provided by peer on sex can make a person lose virginity, having unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Environment is the totality of circumstances that surround a person. It includes the family, socio-economic background and school. Parents could influence the child's behaviour within the home environment, and the interpersonal relationship between child and parent is very important. Parents have a role in selecting their children's peer group, especially in their early years. Parental warmth, control and monitoring play important role in developing the social skills of their children. Some dimensions of parent-child relationships appear important in children's lives irrespective of age. Schuster, Bell, & Kanouse (1996) found that virginity was prevalent among children whose parents had higher educational levels and who had higher educational expectations themselves.

Differences exist between individuals with high and low self-esteem. People with high self-esteem focus on growth and improvement, whereas people with low self-esteem focus on not making mistakes in life (Mruk, 1995). Low self-esteem has been shown to be correlated with a number of negative outcomes, such as depression (Silverstone & Salsali, 2003), failure, exaggeration, social anxiety, low level of interpersonal confidence (Rosenberg & Owen, 2001), and risk of pregnancy (Harter, 1993).

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study is to know the influence that gender has on virginity, to know the perception of undergraduate students about virginity, to find out whether being a virgin in this modern era causes reproach and make people ashamed, and to know how environment and parental upbringing influences virginity among peers.

## **3. Research Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant main and interaction influence of peer pressure and environment on virginity.
2. There will be a significant main and interaction influence of gender and self-esteem on virginity.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study is a survey research. It made use of factorial design because it tested for main and interaction effects of the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are peer pressure, environment, self-esteem and gender while virginity is the dependent variable.

### **3.2 Participants**

The population of this study consisted of undergraduate students of Psychology Department in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. From the population, a sample of 220 was selected through random and purposive sampling methods but questionnaires were retrieved from 200 participants comprising of 98 male and 102 female. The age of the participants ranges between 16 years and 28 years, and they

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

A questionnaire that consists of four sections was used to collect data from the participants. Section A of the questionnaire contained the biographic data of the participants, Section B measured peer pressure using index of peer relations (IPR), Section C measured environment using index of family relations (IFR), and Section D measured virginity using virginity scale (VS).

#### **3.3.1 Index of Peer Relations (IPR)**

This questionnaire was developed by Hudson (1993) to capture information about problems being experience with peer relationships or with a specific peer group. It is a 7-point scale ranging from none of the time to all of the time. It has a reliability alpha of .94 and standard error of measurement of 4.44.

#### **3.3.2 Index of Family Relations (IFR)**

The IFR was designed to measure the degree of a problem that family members have in their relationships with one another. The questionnaire was used as a measure of the participants' family environment. It is a 7-point scale ranging from none of the time to all of the time. The instrument which was developed by Hudson (1993) has a reliability alpha coefficient of .95 and its standard error of measurement is 3.65.

#### **3.3.3 Virginity Scale (VS)**

The virginity scale measure a better understanding about virginity. It is a 5-point rating scale ranging from definitely no to definitely yes. It has a test-retest reliability coefficient of .64

### 3.4 Procedure for Data Collection

Before the questionnaires were administered, the consent of the participants was sought. This was followed by orientation and enlightenment on what the questionnaires were meant for and how to fill them. 220 questionnaires were distributed among the selected 220 participants, but only 200 questionnaires were properly completed.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Method

Data collected for this study were analyzed using 2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## 4. Results

The analyses of data are presented in table format.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant main and interaction influence of peer pressure and environment on virginity.

Table 1: 2x2 Analysis of variance showing the influence of peer pressure and environment on virginity.

Source	SS	DF	MS	F <sub>ob</sub>	F <sub>critical</sub>
Corrected Model	624.385	3	2.528	2.528	2.65
Environment	141.224	1	141.224	1.716	3.89
Peer Group	369.708	1	369.708	4.491	3.89
Environment x Peer Group	79.853	1	79.853	0.970	3.89
Error	16134.770	196	82.320		
Corrected Total	16759.155	199			
Total	744339.155	200			

The interaction influence of peer pressure and environment on virginity is not significant ( $F=0.970$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Similarly, environment has no significant main influence on virginity ( $F=1.716$ ,  $p>.05$ ). However, the main influence of peer pressure on virginity is significant ( $F=4.491$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant main and interaction influence of gender and self-esteem on virginity.

Table 2: 2x2 Analysis of variance showing the influence of gender and self-esteem on virginity.

Source	SS	df	MS	F <sub>ob</sub>	F <sub>critical</sub>
Corrected Model	3741.368	3	1247.123	18.777	2.65
Gender	1.039	1	1.039	0.016	3.89
Self-esteem	3630.717	1	3630.717	54.665	3.89
Gender x Self-esteem	31.774	1	31.774	0.478	3.89
Error	3017.787	196	66.417		
Corrected Total	16759.000	199			
Total	744339.000	200			

The interaction influence of gender and self-esteem on virginity is not significant ( $F=0.478$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Similarly, gender has no significant main influence on virginity ( $F=0.016$ ,  $p>.05$ ), but the main influence of self-esteem on virginity is significant ( $F=54.6$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

## 5. Discussion

Findings from this study revealed that peer pressure and environment has no interaction influence on virginity. Results also showed that environment has no main influence on virginity, but peer pressure has main influence on virginity. This suggests that pressure from peers can influence the virginity status of individual. The plausible explanation of this finding is that peer group has and wields more influence on students than the parents and family. Thus, peer pressure is the most influential and deciding factor in decision on virginity and sex. It means that peer pressure determines whether a person will remain a virgin or not. This supports the previous finding of Brown (2004), but the previous finding of Schuster, Bell, & Kanouse (1996) does not conform to this findings.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that no significant interaction influence of gender and self-esteem was found on virginity. It was also discovered from the results that gender has no significant main influence on virginity, but self-esteem has main influence on virginity. This suggests that gender does not have influence on the virginity status of a person, but self-esteem do influence the virginity status. The influence of self-esteem on virginity was found to be significant. This means that high self-esteem and low self-esteem influences a person's virginity. The plausible explanation is that being a virgin makes people have sense of pride.

## 6. Conclusion

From the results of this study, peer pressure and self-esteem has influence on virginity but environment and gender has no influence on virginity. Also, no interaction influence of peer pressure and environment was found

on virginity, while gender and self-esteem has no interaction influence on virginity.

## 7. Recommendations

From the results of this study, it is recommended that:

- Seminars should be organized for students on peer group selection.
- Students should not impress their peers by playing with their virginity status.
- Parents should be more interested in the type of people and peer group their children belong.

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## AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Omonike Omowaye** is a Research Assistant and a Graduate student at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. She is a Clinical Psychologist by training.

**Helen Olagundoye** teaches Developmental Psychology at Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. She is currently an Assistant Lecturer in the institution and a doctoral student in developmental psychology at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

**Morakinyo Balogun** is a Clinical Psychologist at Federal University, Otuoke, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Clinical Psychology and currently a doctoral student at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

**Benjamin Omolayo** is a Professor of Psychology at Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. He specializes in Industrial and Organizational Psychology with interest in organizational development, human management at work, among others.